United Nations A/53/210

General Assembly

Distr.: General
3 August 1998

Original: English

Fifty-third session
Item 37 of the provisional agenda*
Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development

Preparations for the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the Summit and further initiatives in the year 2000

Note by the Secretary-General

Introduction

1. It will be recalled that the World Summit for Social Development, held at the level of Heads of State and Government at Copenhagen from 6 to 12 March 1995, adopted the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action on Social Development, which was endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/161 of 22 December 1995. In the same resolution, the Assembly also decided to hold a special session in the year 2000 for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit and to consider further actions and initiatives.

2. In its resolution 51/202 of 17 December 1996, the Assembly set out the preparatory process of the special session, and in resolution 52/25 of 26 November 1997, established a Preparatory Committee, which held its organizational session from 19 to 22 May 1998 in New York. The Committee subsequently adopted a number of decisions which are contained in its report to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session.[1]

Offer of the Government of Switzerland

3. On 8 May 1998, the Secretary-General received a letter from the Permanent Observer for Switzerland to the United Nations conveying the offer of the Government of Switzerland to welcome to Geneva in the year 2000 the special session (A/AC.253/4). The Permanent Observer also confirmed that in accordance with paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985, Switzerland would be prepared to finance the additional costs involved in holding the session at Geneva instead of New York. Moreover, the Government would support on a voluntary basis the participation of least developed countries and the organization of parallel events.

Mandate

4. In decision 6, entitled "Arrangements for future sessions", the Committee took note with appreciation of the offer of the Government of Switzerland to the General Assembly to convene its special session on the

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implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and further initiatives in the year 2000 at the United Nations Office at Geneva. In that context, the Committee requested the Secretary-General to prepare "a report on the practical implications of [that] offer, including all additional direct and indirect financial implications for the United Nations, in time for the General Assembly to take a decision on the venue and date at its fifty-third session, in 1998, bearing in mind the need to consult Member States, as appropriate, in preparing the report".

Implications of the offer

5. Rule 3 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly provides that the Assembly shall meet at the Headquarters of the United Nations unless convened elsewhere in pursuance of a decision taken at a previous session or at a request of the majority of the Members of the United Nations.

6. Should the Assembly decide to hold the special session at the United Nations Office at Geneva in 2000, no programme budget implications for the regular budget of the United Nations are foreseen, since the Government of Switzerland has agreed to absorb all additional costs, directly or indirectly involved, as a result of this decision. In this regard, the words "additional costs" should be underscored. Irrespective of the venue of the special session, resource requirements for the session will, according to established budgetary practice, be included in the Secretary-General's proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000–2001, and the special session and its servicing requirements will be listed in the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2000–2001, based on resolution 50/161 and on the assumption that the session would have been held at Headquarters. Only those differences resulting from a change in venue will be regarded as "additional costs".

7. Those additional costs would involve:

Direct costs

(a) In accordance with General Assembly resolution 1798 (XVII) and 41/213, of 11 December 1962 and 19 December 1986, respectively, up to five representatives each of the 48 Member States that are least developed countries are entitled to have travel but no subsistence paid by the Organization when attending a regular session of the Assembly and for one representative or alternate representative when attending a special or emergency special session of the Assembly. In the case of the special session on the Social Summit, the difference in costs arising from representatives of the least developed countries travelling from their home countries to Geneva instead of to New York would constitute additional costs;

(b) Travel from New York to Geneva and subsistence of the President of the General Assembly and his staff;

(c) Travel from New York to Geneva and subsistence of the Secretary-General and his staff;

(d) Travel from New York to Geneva and subsistence of staff from different entities of the Secretariat who will be providing technical and substantive support to the special session; these would include the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Protocol and Liaison Service, the Department of Management, the Department of Public Information and the Office of Legal Affairs;

(e) Communications costs, including tele and video communications costs between Geneva and New York;

(f) Provision of local staff;

(g) Rental of additional equipment;

(h) Miscellaneous costs, including freight charges between New York and Geneva.

Indirect costs

These represent readily identifiable costs resulting from holding the meeting at Geneva rather than in New York and include, but are not limited to:

(a) Additional equipment, utility services and supplies, as required, for the adequate functioning of the special session;

(b) Adequate accommodation in hotels or residence at reasonable commercial rates for persons participating in or attending the special session;

(c) Local transportation to be provided and made available to participants at the session;

(d) Police protection as may be required to ensure the effective functioning of the special session.

8. In reviewing the above, it should be borne in mind that, as one of the established headquarters of the United Nations, the United Nations Office at Geneva has established services in conference servicing, public information and administration. Identification of additional requirements is therefore made on the basis that the existing capacity of

these services at the United Nations Office at Geneva will be utilized to the maximum.

9. Should the Assembly decide to hold the special session at the United Nations Office at Geneva, an agreement will be negotiated between the United Nations and the Government of Switzerland. The agreement will contain a comprehensive and detailed indication of all the additional costs to be borne by the Government.

Voluntary contributions

10. As indicated in paragraph 3 above, the Government of Switzerland has pledged voluntary support to the special session, in addition to covering the additional costs for the United Nations. Support will be provided to assist least developed countries to participate fully in the special session at Geneva. For example, adequately equipped office space will be provided to those least developed countries which have no representation in Geneva, and each least developed country will receive one additional airline ticket. Further support might be granted based on an assessment of individual needs.

11. Moreover, the Government of Switzerland will substantially contribute to the organization of side events. During the preparatory process, the resources provided by the Government of Switzerland will be allocated to best meet the needs of the participants. Switzerland has also started negotiations with several service providers in the above-mentioned areas in order to achieve the best possible conditions for participants, and will inform Member States in due course on the process and results of those negotiations.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 45* (A/53/45).